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Part VIII

Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management

South Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf; Call for Nominations of and Comments on Areas for Oil and Gas Leasing

4310-84

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management

SOUTH ATLANTIC OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF
(TENTATIVE SALE NO. 78)

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS OF AND COMMENTS ON
AREAS FOR OIL AND GAS LEASING

Purpose of Call

Section 102 of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act Amendments of 1978 (92 Stat. 629) describes the purposes of that Act. One of the purposes is to establish policies and procedures intended to expedite exploration and development of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) in order to achieve national economic and energy policy goals, assure national security, reduce dependence on foreign sources, and maintain a favorable balance of payments in world trade. Equally important purposes include balancing energy resource development with the protection of the human, marine and coastal environments, as well as assuring States and local governments the opportunity to review and comment on decisions relating to OCS activities. To assist the Secretary of the Interior in carrying out these purposes, and pursuant to 43 CFR 3313.1, nominations are hereby requested for areas offshore of the South Atlantic States, OCS, for possible oil and gas leasing under the OCS Lands Act (43 U.S.C. 1331-1343) as amended. The Secretary is also requesting comments on the possible environmental impacts and potential use conflicts in specified areas.

Description of Areas

Nominations will be considered for any or all of the blocks seaward of the three mile line, which are to be found on the OCS Official Protraction Diagrams listed below. The area is generally bounded by the 37° N. latitude line on the north, the 28° N. latitude line on the south, and extends eastward to the base of the Continental Slope, including the western edge of the Blake Plateau.

These blocks may be found on the following OCS Official Protraction Diagrams, which may be purchased for $2.00 each from the Manager, New Orleans OCS Office, Bureau of Land Management, Hale Boggs Federal Building, 500 Camp Street, Suite 841, New Orleans, Louisiana, 70130.

OCS OFFICIAL PROTRACTION DIAGRAMS

		Latest Approval or Revision Date
NH 17-2	Brunswick	9/1/78
NH 17-3		6/11/75
NH 17-5	Jacksonville	4/29/75
NH 17-6		6/11/75
NH 17-8	Daytona Beach	4/29/75
NH 17-9		7/21/75
NH 17-11	Orlando	6/11/75
NH 17-12		7/21/75
NH 18-1		7/21/75
NI 17-9	Georgetown	6/11/75
NI 17-11	Savannah	9/1/78
NI 17-12	James Island	6/11/75
NI 18-2	Manteo	10/31/74
NI 18-3		10/31/74
NI 18-4	Beaufort	8/1/75
NI 18-5		8/1/75
NI 18-7	Cape Fear	6/3/76
NI 18-8		8/1/75
NI 18-10		7/5/77
NJ 18-11	Currituck Sound (Except Blocks 5 to 481)	4/25/78
NJ 18-12	(Except Blocks 1 to 433)	10/31/74

Instructions on Call

Nominations must be described by referring to the OCS Official Protraction Diagrams prepared by the Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior and referred to above. Only whole blocks may be nominated. Those nominating twelve blocks or more are requested to arrange their nominations into three groups according to the priority of their interest.

In addition to nominations, we are seeking comments about particular geological, environmental, biological, archaeological, socio-economic conditions or problems, or other information which might bear upon potential leasing and development of particular blocks. Comments should be as specific as possible in identifying individual blocks or areas which should receive special concern and analysis.

Nominations and/or comments must be submitted not later than June 2, 1981, in envelopes labeled "Nominations of Tracts for Leasing in the OCS South Atlantic Area" or "Comments on Leasing in the OCS South Atlantic Area", as appropriate. They must be submitted to the Manager, New Orleans OCS Office, Bureau of Land Management, Hale Boggs Federal Building, 500 Camp Street, Suite 841, New Orleans, Louisiana 70130. Copies should be sent to the Director, Attention 541, Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240, and to the Conservation Manager, U. S. Geological Survey, Eastern Region, 1725 K Street, N.W., Suite 204, Washington, D.C. 20006, and to the Director, U. S. Geological Survey, National Center, Mail Stop 101, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston, Virginia 22092.

Use of Information From Call

Nominations will be evaluated and used along with other geologic and geophysical information to determine what, if any, tracts should be tentatively selected for further environmental analysis pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347) and the OCS Lands Act, as amended. Generally, because of limits on the geographic scope of areas which can be successfully planned for a single sale, only a portion of the tracts nominated are selected for further environmental analysis and possible leasing. Although individual company nominations are considered to be privileged and confidential information, the names of persons or entities submitting nominations or comments will be of public record.

Comments will be considered along with other relevant information available to the Secretary to determine what tracts should be designated for further environmental analysis and study. As a general rule, tracts which are believed to have potential for the production of hydrocarbons are not excluded from further environmental study unless the Secretary has sufficient information to conclude that it is not possible for those tracts to be developed in an environmentally safe manner.

In any event, selection of tracts for further environmental analyses does not insure that the tracts will be subsequently offered for lease or that they will be deleted for environmental or use conflicts. It simply insures that more information will be available when that decision is made. In performing the additional environmental analyses leading to a sale decision, the Department will take into account comments received as it determines particular areas and issues for attention.

Final selection of tracts for competitive bidding will be made only at a later date after compliance with established Departmental procedures and all requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Notice of any tracts finally selected for competitive bidding will be published in the Federal Register stating the conditions and terms for leasing and the place, date, and hour at which bids will be received and opened.

Nominations and comments are also specifically requested on the possible leasing of tracts larger than the standard maximum size of 5,760 acres. Under section 8(b)(1) of the OCS Lands Act (43 U.S.C. 1337) as amended, the Secretary may find "that a larger area is necessary to comprise a reasonable economic production unit." Nominations may be submitted for groupings of blocks into larger areas and should be clearly identified as groups to be considered for leasing as larger sized units. Such nominations of larger areas should refer to block numbers on applicable leasing diagrams and should be submitted at the same time as the single block nominations solicited by this notice and the envelope should be labeled "Group Nomination." Supporting rationale for such nominations is also requested as well as any general comments about the problems and opportunities of this leasing technique. This notice does not constitute a commitment by the Secretary to use this concept. In general, the Department is aware that exploration and development costs are significantly greater in deeper water. What may be an economical or efficient project may vary with these depths as well as other factors. Nominations and comments should address this question only for areas in excess of 200 meters water depth. The public is reminded that the Secretary could tentatively select individual tracts for further study and yet delay making a decision about whether larger leasing areas would be offered until a later date.

Nominations and comments are also requested on the leasing of tracts with terms of longer than 5 years pursuant to section 8(b)(2) of the OCS Lands Act (43 U.S.C. 1337) as amended

Acting Ed Hastey
Director, Bureau of Land Management

Dated: MAR 27 1981

Approved:

Heather L. Ross
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior

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